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ABSTRACT

Attitudes of 39 junior high regular class teachers toward inclusion of special education students in their classroom were measured. The relationship between the special education teachers, special education student, and the mainstream teacher was rated strongly positively. The teachers felt that the special education students produced no additional burdens on the behavioral attitudes of the class, although they did express concern about the academic accomplishment of the mainstreamed child. Perceived responsibility for academic, emotional, and special needs of the special education student reflected a wide range of responses. Most teachers indicated a lack of time to individualize instruction, help individual students, and plan cocperatively with other professionals. In general, despite frustration about grading and competencies in the regular classroom, teachers felt positively toward mainstreaming. The author emphasizes the need for systems to enhance communication between regular and special educators, and offers I suggestions for promoting this communication, including writing a guide to special education services and developing an inservice course to help special educators communicate with parents and regular class teachers. (CL)

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# Communication Between Special Educators and the Mainstream Teachers

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of PL 94-142 and Section 504 rests not only with special educators, but is the responsibility of all educators. Implementing legal mandates cannot take place apart from the general education classroom, students, teachers, administrators, and the community. Therefore, establishing communication channels between mainstream classroom teachers and special education resource room teachers, can lead to more individualized instruction, realistic goal setting, and enable the learning disabled student to achieve academic and social success within the structure of the mainstream.

The difficulties in establishing a structured and yet free flowing communication system, allowing for a two way traffic of ideas, has led to the situation where lack of communication is perhaps one of the major roadblocks to the mainstreaming concept.

Creating a classroom environment where the learning disabled student is not merely present, but integrated as a member of a mainstream class, is the goal set by the special education teacher, and is the overall philosophy of the mainstreaming concept. Creating an educational environment where true involvement is promoted, calls for relationships between professionals marked by mutual purpose, collaborative effort, and recognition of interdependence (Luchow, 1981).

The present study focused on developing modalities of communication which would be most effective in coordinating the efforts of both the mainstream classroom teacher and the special education resource room teacher, and measuring the impact of this communication system on teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the special education students in their classrooms.

## CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"Communication between the resource teacher and the regular classroom teacher is, in all probability, the one area that can lead to either success or failure of a mainstreaming approach for exceptional students." (South Carolina's Child Service Demonstration Center, page 50).

This communication between resource room teacher and regular classroom teacher cannot be over emphasized. Formal and informal communication is essential for total program effectiveness.

All work presented in a resource room environment must be related to the regular academic and vocational programs for it to have meaningful significance. The high school and junior high school student cannot be taught isolated skills. On the elementary school level, especially in the earlier grades, there is still time to teach handwriting skills, work on sound-symbol relationships, and work in developmental programs in reading, basic arithmetical skills and decoding. Because of the many levels of readiness, there is still time to emphasize and develop visual and auditory memory from both auditory and written stimuli. There is time to spend on letter and word recognition. Concrete math programs, such as the Stern materials, can be utilized to teach number concepts. Teachers, too, are more sensitive to the learning styles of the individual children, and are less inclined to stress subject matter over personal intellectual development.

On the secondary level this does not apply. There are some problems which are specifically related to mainstreaming on the secondary level. They are: department standards and department organization of secondary school, interdepartmental competition for space and funds, secondary credit systems. graduation requirements, providing services to the student without stigmatizing, providing support to the mainstream teacher on an immediate basis, and the specific orientations and experience of the secondary school staff (Wullschleger, 1979).

If a learning disables student is to benefit from a mainstream class, the regular class teacher must be willing to modify instructional practices to accommodate this student, whose learning style or ability may be deviant from the majority of students in the class. There must be a coordinated effort to construct a program which will integrate the efforts of both mainstream classroom teachers and special education resource room teachers. The regular educator must know exactly why the child is being mainstreamed, what are the specific goals and how mastery is to be demonstrated. Regular educators should be able to read the Student's Individual Educational Plan. They should be able to communicate so that they know exactly what can and cannot be done by resource room teachers. They must have a specific time to discuss mainstream students with their resource room teachers during the school day. By providing for a specific time, the administrator is acknowledging the importance of the consultive role of the special educator and

at the same time recognizing the needs of the regular teachers.

The present approach to education must be restructured so that a closer collaboration and communication between all levels of instruction can be established. Often there is a false separation between special education and regular education. Interdepartmental communication is essential if the mainstream program is to be truly effective (McNamara, Seidenberg, Ottman, 1981).

There has been little research which has looked specifically at communication links among teachers. This lack of research perhaps mirrors the absence of communication. This has been especially true on the secondary level, where individual teachers become deeply involved in their specific discipline and each conducts his/her own isolated lessons behind the closed door of the classroom.

Teaching has always been a lonely job. Once the bell has sounded and the class door is closed, the teacher is left on one side of an imaginery line faced by thirty to thirty-five young faces in various stages of expectancy. How the teacher teaches the subject matter, and the methods he/she uses to impart this information, is left up to the individual.

The classroom teacher is seldom trained to be a member of a team or organization. Yet, the state of willingness of individuals to participate fully as a team member is an important issue in education. The teacher must feel full partnership in the team, if he/she is to become a valuable member. Unfortunately, the hierarchy of the educational strata has taught

each teacher that he or she is an island. Teachers now view the demands of the new laws for the handicapped from an isolated and lonely perspective. They seldom conceptualize how they might use other educators to assist them. Many feel threatened that their teaching methodologies are inadequate, that their standards of excellence are being questioned, that their tests are being examined, and that they are being held accountable for lesson plans planned one week in advance.

Because there has been a tendency to remove responsibility of special children from regular classroom teachers, there has been a reduction in the incentive for classroom teachers to increase their own skills in these special areas. Very often classroom teachers conclude that the removal of difficult or deficient children from their classroom is the only way to provide these children with adequate, specialized istruction (Gear and Gable, 1979).

In America it is true that an overwhelming number of regular class teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with handicapped children. Hudson, Graham and Warner (1979) found that elementary school regular class teachers were not supportive of the mainstreaming concept.

Hudson, Graham and Warner developed a twenty-eight item questionnaire which was designed to ascertain if there was one specific need of the teachers which had to be met, and if the teachers had the same opinions about the various questions asked. As a result of this survey, the teachers felt that they did not have the time, support services, or necessary

training to effectively teach exceptional students. Two thirds of the teachers questioned viewed special class placement as superior to placement in the mainstream.

Improved relations in communication among classroom teachers, special education teachers and guidance personnel was one of the major competencies listed by building principals in research done by Chalfant, Pysh and Moultries (1979). The researchers asked principals of eight buildings to list competency areas they believed the members of their respective staffs needed in order to deal more effectively with the learning problems of handicapped children. The competencies listed were:

1. Techniques for individualizing instruction.
2. Knowledge of the characteristics of learning disabilities.
3. Identification of resource personnel.
4. Improved relations in communications.
5. Evaluation methods and expectations for children with learning disabilites.
6. Educational materials and books for use by learning-ing disabled children.

Because the teachers in this study pleaded for no more in-service courses, a teachers' support system was constructed. It consisted of three elected teachers. The main function of the team was to provide direct assistance to teachers. This Teacher Assistance Team addressed major questions:

1. The definition of the target population.

2. Responsibility for referrals

3. Constituency of the support team

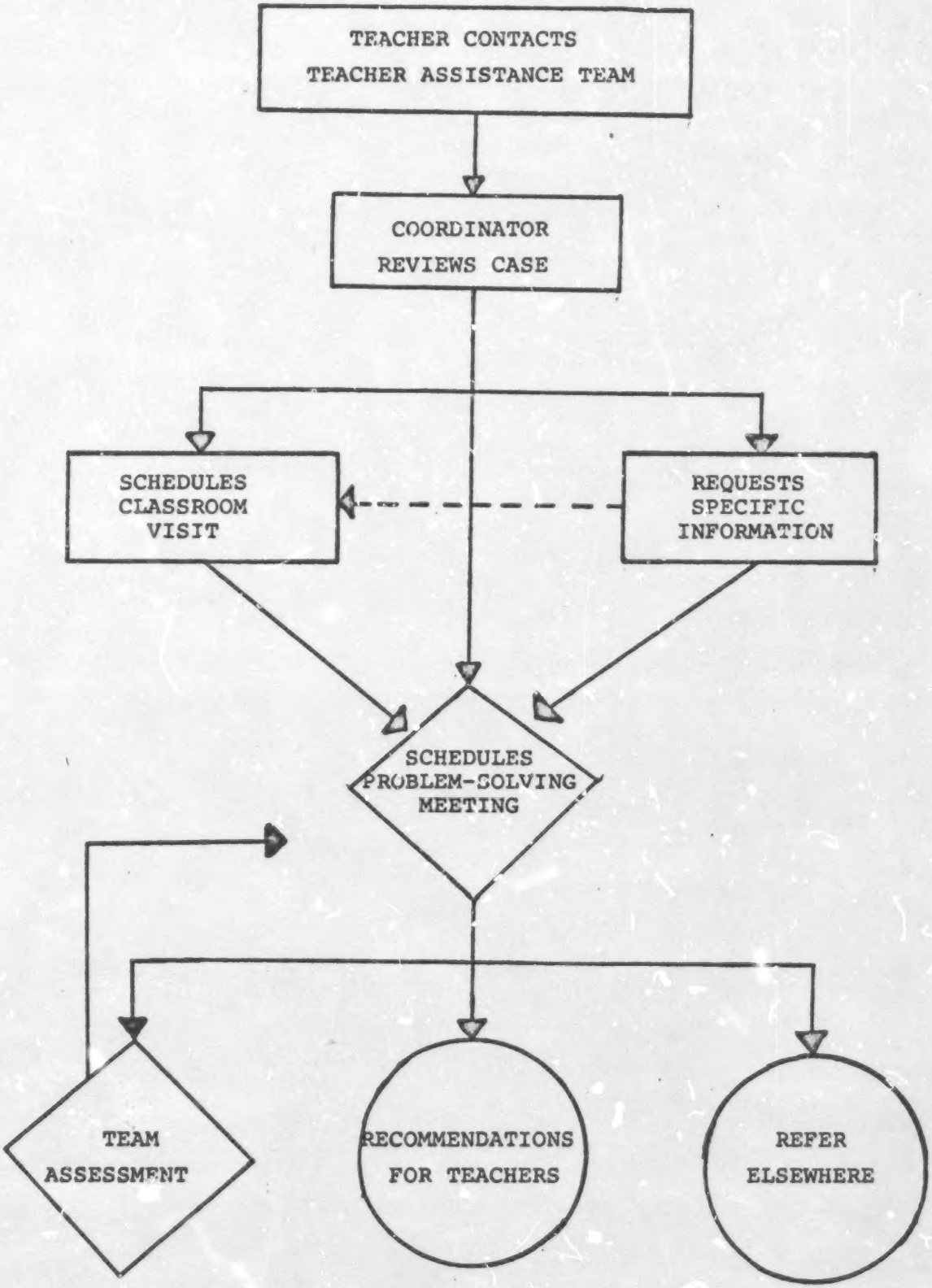
4. Coordination of the team

5. Operating procedures for the team.

As a result of this model, the Teacher Assistance Team was able to handle 63.5% of the teacher referrals, thus allowing the special education staff to serve children who really required help. Given immediate support services, strategies for dealing with difficult youngsters, evaluations and expectation standards clearly defined for the individual child, the specific learning materials suggested and available for classroom use, the classroom teacher was better able to deal with the child who deviated from the norm, both in learning style and classroom behavior. Lines of communication were established between the referring teacher and the Teacher Assistance Team, immediate feedback was available, and suggestions for coping with the individual child were readily available.

The Teacher Assistance Team model (See figure 1) offers a support system for classroom teachers by forming teachers into peer problems-solving groups which can help children, parents and themselves by helping teachers conceptualize and understand the nature of individual handicapped children's learning and behavior problems and by creating a more positive attitude among regular teachers and administrators with respect to working with handicapped children who learn differently (Chalfant, Pysh and Moultrie, page 94). It provides a vehicle wherein the skills and remediation used with one special

FIGURE 1




Chalfant, Pysh, and Moultrie, 1979, Page 91

education youngster can affect the teacher's instructional style with all students.

The benefit of direct communication and assistance by resource specialists was the subject of a study done by Singleton (1976), where two faculties were helped by resource personnel. One faculty participated in a workshop series conducted by resource specialists. The other faculty received direct assistance and communicated with the learning disabilities teacher on a regular basis. The classroom teachers were assisted in modifying programs and materials to meet the needs of exceptional learners. Bulletins were distributed to staff members. Included in such bulletins were specific teaching techniques, information related to concepts of mainstreaming, and materials pertaining to classroom management. From a questionnaire it was found that the direct assistance group demonstrated significant differences in attitudes towards handicapped individuals, while the group attending the workshop demonstrated no significant change in attitudes from those first recorded on the original survey.

Ottman (1981) has discussed the role of communication in the preparation of the regular classroom teacher. He maintained that the inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom requires both special educators and regular classroom teachers to assume new roles. Before a handicapped student is integrated into a regular classroom, the special educator should offer to assist the regular teacher in defining and assessing any possible problems. The regular classroom

teacher should be provided with background of the student's needs and a description of the major components of his or her handicapping conditions. The regular classroom teacher should be invited to attend The Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.) conference, in which the goals are developed for the mainstream student. The special educator should aid the regular teacher in the measurement of goals and provide appropriate instruments to gather such data as a behavior checklist. If there is a behavioral consideration, the special educator can help to set up and implement a program to increase and/or maintain the student's appropriate behavior. Ottman feels that enlisting the aid and cooperation of the regular classroom teacher before mainstreaming becomes a reality, is a necessity to ensure a smooth transition for the handicapped student.

The most important aspect of mainstreaming is that close contact must be maintained with both the handicapped child's parents, and the regular classroom teacher. This is the only way there can be true harmony in the mainstreaming effort (Ottman, 1981).

Establishing communication links was the goal of the South Carolina Child Service Demonstration Center. The teacher in this setup, teaches students in the resource room and also serves as a consultant to classroom teachers. It is the job of the resource room teacher to provide a total Individual Educational Plan, which contains not only remediation and strategies taught in the resource room, but is applicable to

all mainstream areas as well. (See figure 2)

The South Carolina Study envisions the resource room person as a public relations expert and sees the success of the resource room program as dependent highly on the goodwill of principal, teachers, staff, pupils and parents. They list as specific skills for resource personnel as:

1. Ability to hear, understand and listen to what is being said by the regular classroom teacher.

2. Acknowledge openly the skills held by the regular classroom teacher.

3. Be cognizant of the problems faced by regular classroom teachers.

4. Adjust, or modify suggestions to the atmosphere of the specific classroom.

5. Be honest.

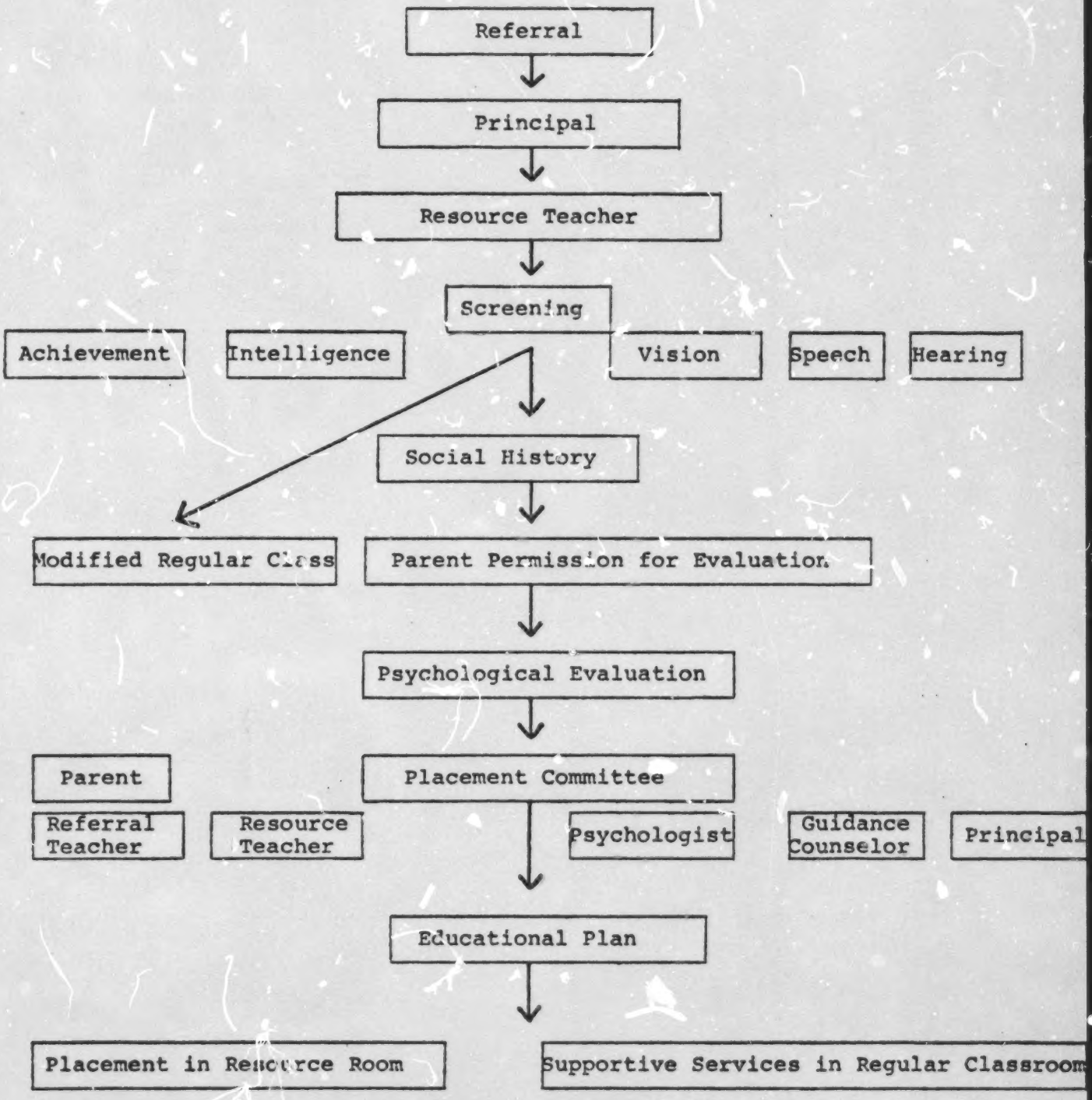
6. Seek the exchange of ideas and suggestions.

The researchers felt that the cooperation, understanding, and commitment of the building principal, guidance counselor, and regular classroom teachers are essential components of a successful program. It was felt that the teachers were more likely to accept the resource room program if they were made aware of the benefits offered through the program. A handout and discussion of these services is beneficial.

As a result of the South Carolina Study, the South Carolina staff set up conferences between the mainstream teacher and the resource room teacher. These conferences were set up on a continuing basis. Once a month these teachers would meet and share ideas and materials. One copy of the minutes would be

FIGURE 2

Referral, Screening, Evaluation, Placement




SOUTH CAROLINA STUDY, 1977, Page 19

recorded and the other copy given to the classroom teacher as a reminder of the areas discussed. A follow-up conference would be planned. This would be an assessment, where progress was recorded, and the reasons for success or failure would be evaluated. (See figure 2)

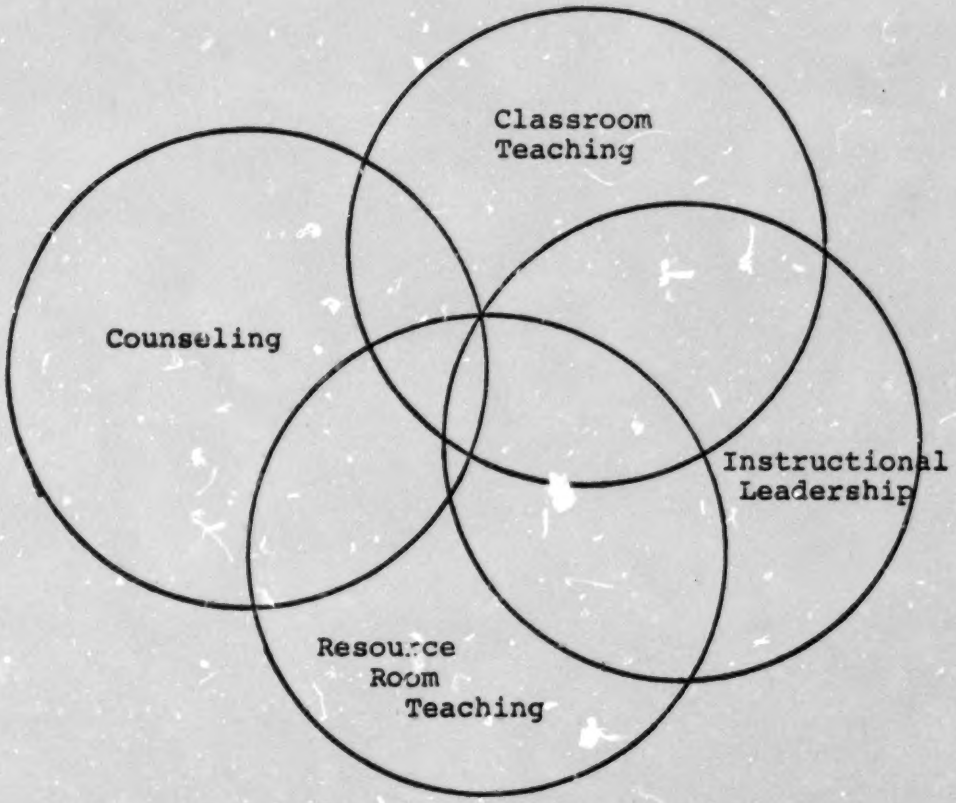
The South Carolina Study also states that it is imperative that resource teachers see regular classroom teachers in groups to discuss ongoing problems being encountered by the students in their school specifically. The resource teacher must, in addition to scheduled conferences and meetings and periodic written reports, be able to "drop by" informally after school to say, "How are things going?" The teacher must be visible to the regular classroom teachers as much as possible.

This integration of school services is seen in Figure 3. This integration is of vital importance if true mainstreaming is to take place.

## SUMMARY

The implementation of PL 94-142 and Section 504 must be the responsibility of the entire school, faculty, administration, and community. A communication system between mainstream regular classroom teachers and resource room teachers serving special needs populations must be established. A classroom environment has to be created where the special education student can be integrated as a member of that class.

FIGURE 3


Classroom
Teaching
Counseling
Instructional
Leadership
Resource
Room
Teaching

Studies have shown that, if communication is present, teacher attitudes towards special education youngsters will improve, student work will improve, and mainstream teachers will become more aware of the needs of the handicapped youngster. Yet, in a study by Hudson, Graham and Warner (1979) the teachers felt that they did not receive the support services necessary to enable them to work with a special child. They complained of lack of time and training. Chalfant, Pysh and Moultries (1979) showed that teachers pleaded for no more in-service courses. Yet, when a Teacher Assistance Team was established the classroom teacher was better able to cope with the special child. Singleton (1976) showed that teachers receiving direct assistance changed their attitudes about working with handicapped youngsters. McNamara (1981), Seidenberg (1981), and Hauser (1979) all state that a mainstream program's effectiveness can be measured by the extent to which it is integrated into the whole school organization. How then, can communication links be established between the resource room teacher and the regular classroom teacher? What are some possible ways of establishing these communication links, and how does it impact upon the teachers and the special education student?

## CHAPTER III

## PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

The student population used in this study comes from the junior high school level and lives in a well to do suburban community. A strong, involved parents' group enforces compliance with all aspects of PL 94-142. There are cascades of available services, from residential treatment centers, to open-ended self-contained classroom, to the resource room, where most students spend one forty minute period each day. There are fifty-five students assigned to a resource room and there are three resource room teachers in the building. Unless there is a specific parent request, the students are assigned to the resource room teacher by the chairperson of guidance and/or the special education supervisor. Among the students, the ratio of boys to girls is 39:16.

The teacher population is experienced, with most of the teachers having tenure and having taught in the district for eight years or more. Since there is a large special education population in the district (eight hundred students) the teachers are aware of the program and have some knowledge of the needs of the learning disabled population. Two mainstream teachers have taken courses in special education and many of them know families who have handicapped children.

The administration is structured and supportive. The principal has been involved with education for thirty-five years and is highly respected by his teachers. The two assistant

principals are very supportive of the needs of special education youngsters and there is a great deal of flexibility in programming and teacher selection.

The junior high school resource room presents many different problems from those on the high school level. Although the pressures of Regent Exams, Regent Competencies, S.A.T., and A.C.T. tests and post high school planning are not present, other variables interfere with the students' achievements. Students are not intrinsically motivated because of long histories of failure in the educational setting. Attention span is limited in the twelve to fifteen year old adolescent. Subject's such as social studies, science and beginning algebra are conceptualized rather than memorized, thus causing serious problems for many learning disabled youngsters. Because of these difficulties it was important to have continuous dialogue, in both written and verbal form, with the mainstream classroom teacher.

As a newcomer in the junior high school, it was challenging to endeavor to establish these vital communication links, yet teacher responses to weekly lesson plans were poor. A careful record was then kept to record the progress of the mainstream teacher in regard to responses to the resource room teacher's requests for information about content areas. (See appendix A for Academic Plan Form # 1)

In response to the need for information, an Academic Plan Form was devised by this researcher. It was subsequently adopted by the entire school district for the use of special

education teachers on all three levels, primary, junior, and senior high school.

To make the mainstream teacher feel more involved in the educational planning of the student or students in his/her class, the Individual Educational Plan for his/her specific students was shared with the teacher. This Individual Educational Plan was developed by a committee of primary and secondary special education teachers under the direction of the special education administrator, Dr. Richard Aquilina. (See appendix A) It followed all the material as mandated by both federal and state law and added information which the teachers thought important in the preparation of goals for the handicapped student. The content area and goals for each class were discussed by both the regular classroom teacher and the resource room teacher. After preparation of seven pages of plans for each student, a flow chart listing all the student's mainstream teachers was made. (See appendix B) This Individual Educational Plan was distributed to each teacher having a special education youngster in his or her class. In this way the mainstream teachers could easily see the student's deficits and strengths, the major thrust of remedial work in the resource room and also would be forced to make a binding commitment to give specific help in certain areas.

The I.E.P. was followed by an Individual Profile Sheet (Student Information Sheet) developed by this researcher. (See appendix B) This profile included recent reading scores, both in inferential and literal comprehension, recent math scores,

including numerical computations and work problems, behavioral problems and suggestions handling them, academic strengths and weaknesses, implications for learning the specific subject area, and suggestions on how this student could be helped in each separate subject area. These information sheets were to be kept on file in the student's folder for reference by the mainstream teacher. The response to this information was extremely positive, since the teachers perceived their role with the special education youngster was a shared one and not primarily in the hands of either the special education teacher or the regular classroom teacher.

A simple monitoring device was then constructed. It consisted of a simple checklist, which the teacher could complete in two to three minutes. This progress report then came back to the resource room teacher so that supplementary help could be given in a subject area as immediately as it was needed. It also had the effect of coordinating teacher efforts and making the student aware that his or her education was a team effort. (See appendix A )

Weekly plan sheets were distributed to each mainstream teacher on Thursday of each week. Each sheet had the names of all students who received resource room assistance in that specific mainstream class. On the sheet the regular class teacher records the work to be covered that week, homework assignments, dates for exams, and reports, and any area in which the student or students would need extra help. When these are returned by Friday, the resource room teacher has

time to research and create various teaching alternatives to reinforce skills and information learned in the mainstream class. Alternate methodologies can be devised and helpful visuals can reinforce the written word. Because of this lesson plan sheet, the resource room teacher is always aware when tests will be given, and what topics will be covered. Teaching study habits, strategies for learning and mnemonic devices for retention of learned information is giving the special education youngsters the tools he/she needs for success in school.

The student learns strategies, which can then be transfered to all situations.

Conferencing with parents is an essential factor required in complying with Federal regulations regarding the establishment of an Individual Educational Plan. Three parties must be in attendance when there is a review of the I.E.P. These members include the special educator, the parent or parents, and often the guidance counselor and/or the school psychologist. Twenty such conferences were scheduled during the two days specifically allocated for these meetings. A copy of the parent's names, the hour, day, and place of the conference were placed on a chart and a copy sent to every teacher in the school. Many teachers responded by attending these conferences. Many others requested class coverage for a few minutes so that they could meet with the parents. Such cooperation among parents and teachers fostered better understanding of the needs of the special education student.

In order to increase the teacher's understanding of the resource room population, a staff meeting was called by the principal upon the request of the special education teachers. (See appendix C) Using the overhead projector, the special education teachers reviewed the federally mandated I.E.P,'s and their content, went over the needs for weekly plans from mainstream teachers, illustrated the weekly individualized student contracts, spoke about the monthly calendars so that students could begin to plan ahead, and broke down tasks into more simple components and also discussed the makeup of the resource room population.

There were negative comments made by some of the regular classroom teachers. One classroom teacher felt that the student should be "left back" until he/she could learn to take notes from a classroom lecture. It was explained that many learning deficits could not be readily seen or understood, but were nontheless present. The teacher was invited into the resource room to see what the special education teacher was doing there, how the mainstream methodologies were altered, and to learn more about the needs of special youngsters. The teacher came in the very next day, and after many minutes of explanations, instruction, and discussions of goals, apologized for his misunderstandings.

To help understand the regular classroom teacher's feelings, a questionnaire was distributed to the faculty members. (See appendix D) The survey was to gather a concensus of the teachers' feelings towards the mainstreaming of special education

youngsters in their class. This census of intangibles would be used to help the special education teacher realize the feelings of the regular classroom teacher, help to alleviate and/or clearify some of the problems cited in the survey, and to establish better lines of communication between the special education teacher and the teacher in the regular classroom.

This twenty-five item survey was in the form of a Likert Scale, using five points - from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It was developed by this researcher, since no measurement of mainstream teacher attitude could be found in the literature. This survey was developed from an inventory devised by the U.C.L.A. Special Education Program in 1974. The U.C.L.A. questionnaire was devised to measure teacher's attitudes towards one handicapped child, Philip (Wullschleger, 1979).

This researcher's questionnaire was given to the entire faculty at the junior high school level. English, social studies, science, art, math, computer math, business, physical education, music, foreign language and reading teachers were represented. There were no supervisory personnel, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, aides, or nurses among those questioned.

The survey tried to ascertain mainstream teachers' feelings about having special education students in their classrooms. Some questions were worded where the strongly agree would reflect a negative attitude toward the handicapped, and other questions reflected a positive attitude if the strongly

agree were circled. The questions reflected the teachers' feelings in the area of discipline, grading, effect of the mainstreaming concept on regular classroom students, standards demanded by the educational hierarchy, demands on teachers' time, and responsibility for the education of mainstreamed special education youngsters.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

As a result of the increase in communication between resource room personnel and the regular classroom teacher there was a significant increase in the teacher responses to weekly lesson plans as seen in Table 1. In September, very few teachers were responding in written form. As of April, 1982 there was a marked increase in most departments with the exception of social studies. This increase began in January as a result of an informative faculty meeting presentation by the special education staff. The English department showed an increase from fifty percent to sixty-six percent. One teacher began to describe his weekly plans verbally. The second week in February, he began to record his work for the week, thus raising the department to eighty-three percent.

As of March 1, 1982 there is a one hundred percent response from the English department. The mathematics department has shown a continuous increase as well. It has jumped from a sixteen percent in September to eighty-three percent in April. The remaining teachers are working in the I.P.I. (Industrial Math Progress Inventory) and do not need supportive assistance from resource room personnel.

The science department moved from a zero response to an eighty-three percent growth. Only one teacher refused to complete the weekly lesson plan forms.

## Communication Between Mainstream Teacher and Resource Teacher

### Weekly Lesson Plans

| Department | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Jan. | February 1 | February 2 | February 3 | February 4 | March 1 | March 2 | March 3 | A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English (Language Arts) (6 teachers) | 33% | [illegible] | 50% | 50% | 66% | 66% | 83% | 83% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Health (2 teachers) | - | - | 50% | 50% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Mathematics (6 teachers) | 16.6% | 16.6% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 66% | 66% | 66% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% |
| Science (6 teachers) | 0 | 0 | 16.6% | 33.3% | 50% | 50% | 66% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 83% |
| Social Studies (7 teachers) | 14.2% | 28.57% | 28.57% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 42.8% | 59% |
| Computer Science (1 teacher) | - | - | - | - | - | - | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Industrial Arts (Special Projects Only) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

* Percent of Teachers Responding to Weekly Lesson Plans

The social studies department appears to be the most disappointing. The teachers have been cooperative and extremely willing to share information if approached individually using verbal interaction. Only forty-two percent of these teachers record weekly assignments, and althouth the others are willing to communicate verbally, they "forget" to record their weekly plans on paper.

Another noticeable change is the teachers' willingness to return the Instruction Adjustment Sheet (See appendix A). Most of the teachers are now becoming aware of their own methods of teaching and testing, and the influence of these methodologies on the learning styles of learning disabled students. Many have become aware that matching columns on exams present extreme difficulty for many students with visual processing difficulties. Some teachers are now sensitized to the need for typed, rather than handwritten exams. One math teacher has given his students scrap paper divided into boxes to help those students who have organizational skill deficits.

In summary, there have been significant changes in both teacher responses and teacher awareness since the communication program began.

## CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this investigation was to study factors which would influence, or contribute to, the degree of awareness and sensitivity of the regular classroom teacher's perception of the special education youngster in his/her classroom. Possible ways to establish communication links were explored and then evaluated to see if these communication pathways had any impact on the students' ability to learn and the readiness with which the regular classroom teacher would share information with the special education resource room teacher.

Teachers' feelings were measured on a questionnaire distributed to the entire faculty. There were thirty-nine teachers responding out of a possible fifty-one persons. From the twenty-five items questioned, seven investigative groups were formed (See table 2). The first component, the relationship between the special education teacher, the special education student, and the mainstream teacher showed a strongly positive reply. Ninety-four percent of the teachers felt that they, as classroom teachers, could establish a good relationship with a special education youngster in the mainstream class. Only one teacher of the thirty-nine responding felt that establishing this rapport would present a problem. The mean for this grouping way 1.855 with a standard deviation of .384. (See table 3)

## Regular Education Teacher's Opinions on Mainstreaming

| Investigative Grouping | Very Positive | | | | Negative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A. Special education students and the relationship to the regular classroom teacher. | (38%) | (56%) | (2%) | - | - |
| B. Special education students and their relationship to other students in the regular classroom. | 1 (18%) | 2 (64%) | 3 (12.8%) | 4 - | 5 - |
| C. Special education and the academic accomplishments of the L. D. student in the mainstream. | 1 (9%) | 2 (69%) | 3 (18%) | 4 - | 5 - |
| D. The major responsibility for special education students lie with the special education teacher. | 1 (5.1%) | 2 (15.4%) | 3 (51.3%) | 4 (12.8%) | 5 (7.7%) |
| E. Special education students in the mainstream do not place undo pressure on the regular classroom teacher in regard to planning curriculum, individualization of instruction, behavioral problems, grading and goal setting. | 1 (5.1%) | 2 (64%) | 3 (28.2%) | 4 - | 5 - |
| F. The self concept of the L. D. student improves when that student is mainstreamed. | 1 (7.7%) | 2 (41%) | 3 (41%) | 4 (5.1%) | 5 - |
| G. There is growth in understanding and teaching techniques when L. D. students are in your class. | 1 (10.2%) | 2 (30.8%) | 3 (18%) | 4 (25.6%) | 5 (12.8%) |

TABLE 3

Regular Education Teacher's Opinions on Mainstreaming

| (Variable) Investigative Grouping | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| A. Special education students and the relationships to the regular classroom teacher. | 1.855 | .384 |
| B. Special education students and their relationships to other students in the regular classroom. | 2.044 | .502 |
| C. Special education and the academic accomplishments of the L. D. student in the mainstream. | 2.169 | .467 |
| D. The major responsibility for special education students lie with the special education teacher. | 3.060 | .721 |
| E. Special education students in the mainstream do not place undo pressure on the regular classroom teacher in regard to planning curriculum, individualization of instruction, behavioral problems, grading and goal setting. | 2.442 | .446 |
| F. The self concept of the L. D. student improves when that student is mainstreamed. | 2.395 | .637 |
| G. There is growth in understanding and teaching techniques when L. D. students are placed in regular classes. | 3.00 | 1.252 |

The second category discussed the relationships established among peer groups of learning disabled and "normal" students. The question relates to the philosophy of modeling and whether a special education youngster can benefit socially from being with regular non-handicapped students. The problem of social acceptance, sensitivity, awareness of special needs, and social integration with mainstream students is of prime importance when considering whether or not to allow handicapped children in a regular classroom. There have been many rationalizations made by regular educators to justify their negative feelings towards the mainstreaming concept. One of the most frequently used arguments is that special education youngsters cause disturbances in the classroom, whether because of their hyperkinesis and inability to sit still, or because their presence causes an adverse effect on the other children in the classroom. When this dimension was presented on a scale of one to five, the results were extremely positive, with the exception of three respondents. All the teachers felt that special education youngsters posed no additional burdens upon the behavioral attitudes of the class. Interestingly, many of the teachers qualified question eleven by stating that special education youngsters often make the class more manageable because of the class' sensitivity to the needs of the special child.

Category three concerned itself with the academic accomplishments of the special education child in the mainstream class. In this category there was more uncertainty on the part of the regular classroom teachers. Some teachers responded

that their answer had to be completely individualized, depending upon the specific student. Most of those professionals questioned felt that students should be mainstreamed if they could meet certain academic standard within the mainstream. They did not feel that children should be placed in regular classes for purely social purposes.

The academic area seems to be the primary area of concern on the secondary level. Almost thirteen percent of the teachers questioned as to whether a child could be passed purely on good effort, felt that academic criteria must be established for each child placed in a regular classroom. This, too, could present a ripple effect. Other children in the classroom resent special handling of handicapped youngsters. They want to know "how they can get away with" lack of homework, inadequate grades, and poor classroom participation. Teachers questioned at what level of schooling would you hold the special education student accountable for the accomplishment of his or her school work?

After speaking to more than twenty-five individual faculty members this researcher found that teachers are deeply concerned about their jobs, their performance, and their futures in a poor job market. They are concerned about their reputations as diseminators of knowledge and education. They are worried about the reactions of administrators and supervisors if their academic standards are too flexible. They are troubled by a backlash of parents of "normal students" who refute the individualization and flexibility offered the special

education youngster and often denied their "normal" youngster. Yet, with all of these concerns, the teachers responded favorably (69%) and showed a standard deviation of only .467. It is now up to school boards, administration, and chairpersons to give support and assurance to the classroom teacher, if he or she is to feel comfortable about the academic performances of all the students in his or her classroom.

Category Four - perceived responsibility for academic, emotional, and special needs of the special education student - showed the greatest variance. In this grouping the standard deviation rose to .721 and the mean was 3.060. This, then, is a question of educational philosophy, which has still been left unclarified. Are special education students placed in the mainstream by special educators, monitored by special educators, and are the sole responsibility of the special educators' team? Or are special education children placed in the mainstream by guidance personnel and administration, under the same authorities, rules, and regulations in the school as are all other children, and given supportive services in the resource or open ended self-contained classroom? Who, exactly, has the responsibility for the success or failure of the mainstreamed special education youngster? Fifty-four percent of the respondents were undecided as to where the responsibility for special education students should lie. Thirty percent of those responding felt that the special education teacher should assume full responsibility for the special needs youngster. Only seven percent of the teachers responding felt that special education students were

the responsibility of the school administrators and classroom teachers. It is interesting to note that most of those responding were willing to have special youngsters in their class as long as their responsibility in regard to those youngsers did not increase. They visualized them as special education children who were mainstreamed, as opposed to children in their classroom who need supportive services.

Category Five - Teacher perceptions of problems in time, planning, individual instruction, parent pressures, behaviorial problems, and materials - reflected the teachers' perceptions of problems involving additional time for planning and remediating youngsters, the need to establish individualized instruction for those students who cannot handle present modalities of learning style, problems of parent pressure - both special education parents and a backlash from regular students' parents, lack of materials and supplies, and time needed to conference and share information with resource room personnel.

Most of the respondents felt that they had enough material, had no problems with parents, but did lack time to spend individualizing instruction, time to spend helping individual children within the classroom, time to plan strategies with resource room teachers and administration. Sixty-six percent of the teachers questioned felt that time was not a factor of importance, yet twenty percent of the respondents felt that they needed more time to adequately handle special education youngsters in their mainstream class.

Category Six - Growth of the regular teacher as a result of association with special needs students - reflected the perceptions of the teachers on the growth of self concept of regular teachers. Thirty-eight of the teachers felt that their overall competence would not increase as a result of working with special needs students. Thirty-six of the respondents felt that their work with handicapped children made them more perceptive to the needs of all the youngsters in their class.

Category six reflected the perceptions of the teachers on the growth of self concept of special education youngsters placed in the mainstream. As a group, the teachers felt that a special education student will develop a more positive attitude towards school when mainstreamed with regular students. Nevertheless, thirty-three percent of those responding felt that students should not be mainstreamed purely for purposes of "modeling" and socialization. Fifteen percent of the teachers were undecided and only seven percent felt that socialization should be the primary reason for mainstreaming.

In total, the teachers felt positively towards mainstreaming, although they did feel frustration about grading and competencies in the regular classroom.

Communication, therefore, is a necessary component of the mainstreaming process. Although teachers say they feel positively towards mainstreaming, they are still hesitant to become involved in a team effort to help educate special education youngsters.

Communication on paper is not enough. There must be verbal exchange, a meeting of the mind and the face. Since each resource room teacher is responsible for twenty students, and each of the twenty students have five to six mainstream teachers, the amount of paper work and recording can be mind boggling. An efficiency expert in paper pushing would have difficulty keeping up to date. Even in our computer age, an expert would be hard put to keep up with the weekly plans of so many classroom teachers.

It is necessary, therefore, for the resource room teacher to have a minimum of one period each day in which he/she can speak to individual teachers. The frustrations and anxieties of the classroom teachers can best be alleviated when verbal contact is available. If these negative feelings are allowed to continue for any period of time, resentment grows and new incidents arise and are magnified.

As seen in the literature, the South Carolina Staff Development Guide requires the resource room teacher to meet with the mainstreaming teacher on a regular basis.

Hudson, Graham and Warner (1979) found that teachers were not supportive of mainstreaming because they felt there was a lack of supportive services. If time were allocated for discussion of the special education student, perhaps the regular classroom teacher would not feel so isolated and frustrated in his/her attempts to educate the handicapped youngster.

Chalfant, Pysh and Moultries (1979) stated that improved relations in communications, as well as the identification of

resource personnel would help the mainstream staff deal more effectively with learning disabled children. By establishing both oral and written communication channels, the resource person is making herself/himself more available for supportive services, can offer suggestions for educational material and books, can develop techniques in coordination with the classroom teacher in individualizing instruction, and is also sensitizing the mainstream teacher to the characteristics and needs of the special education student.

In Singleton's study (1976) it was shown that those teachers who received direct assistance and communicated with special education personnel, felt more positive in their ability to help handicapped individuals.

Ottman (1981) states that special educators and regular classroom teachers must assume new roles. There must be constant communication between the teachers both in the development of the Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.) and in the accomplishment of academic and social goals within the mainstream class.

Some implications for resource room teachers would be the involvement of the special education teacher with the regular mainstream teacher to further develop a viable educational plan for each youngster in the class. Some other suggestions are:

1. Establish one period per day for resource room teachers to meet with regular classroom teachers.
2. Publish a guide to special education services,

describing the role of each of the services, and the role of each of the professionals within that service.

3. Establish an in-service course for special education teachers to teach them how to communicate with both parents and regular classroom teachers by using role playing models, lecturing on interviewing techniques, and how to listen.

4. Establish an exchange program whereby the resource room teacher can address a regular classroom and the regular teacher teaches the students in the resource room for one day.

5. Sensitize the administration to the need for setting a "tone" for the school on the importance of communication between the various teachers.

6. Address the school board on the need for flexibility of grading and examinations. Accountability must be to the students and not in the form of grades and percentage of passing students on Regents exams.

7. Establish with the teachers' union the need for weekly lesson plans returned to the resource room teacher on time, so that it no longer becomes a "favor" to get these plans.

8. Re-evaluate education courses on the college level so that classroom teachers fully understand their responsibility to the individual student and to the students on the special education program.

9. Establish an I.E.P. which reflects not only the services, and goals of the resource room, but reflects the entire school program, and involves all of the students' teachers.

10. Establish a questionnaire so that the special

education students' teachers have the opportunity to share their expertise with the teachers of the following year. In this way they can share with their colleagues those strategies they found most helpful and which intervensions worked the best for the individual student.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

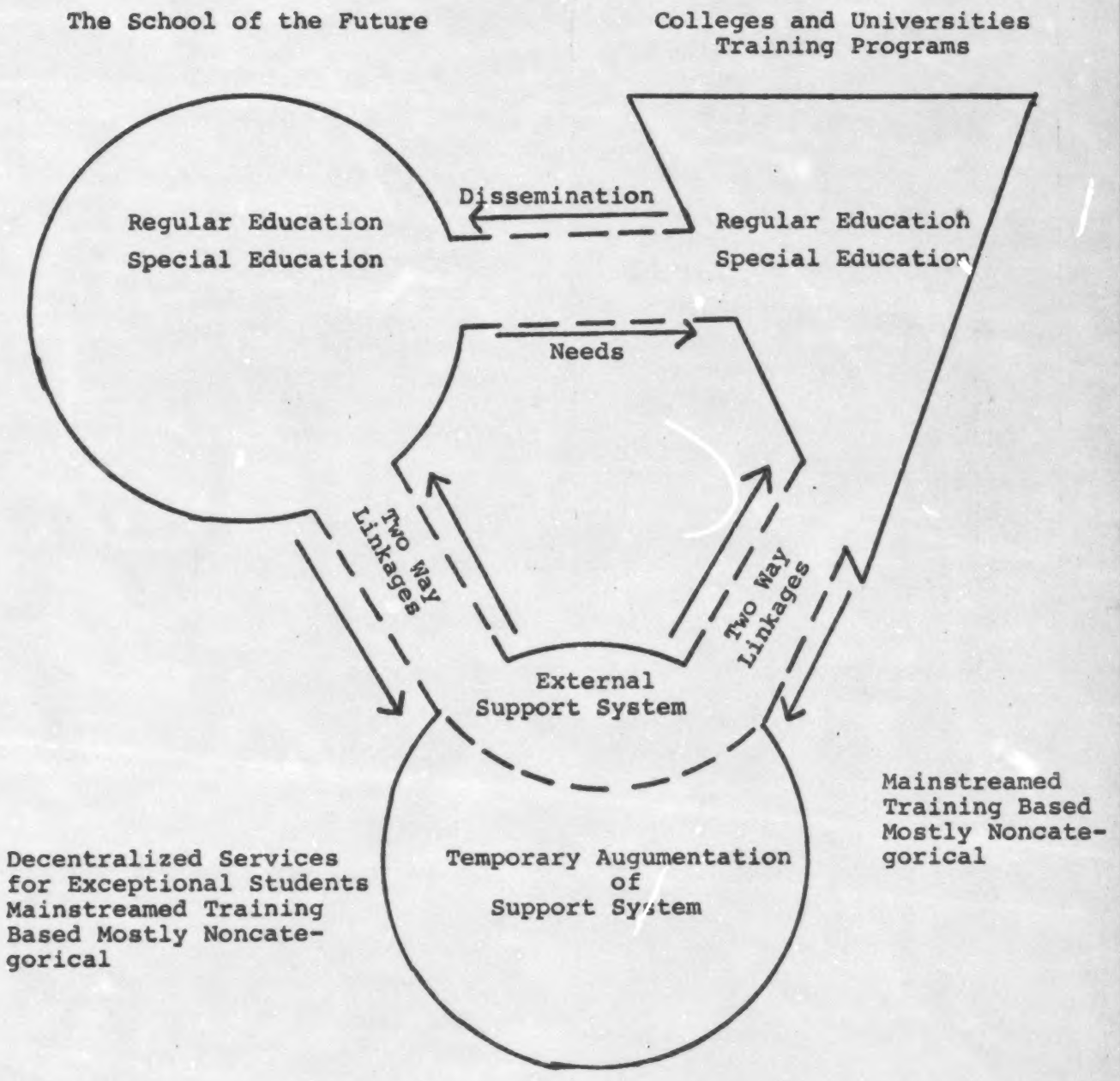
The results of this paper will be used to increase the interaction between special education and regular mainstream education. This interfacing of educational systems is the school of the future. (See figure 4)

Further research could prove helpful in developing new ways for regular classroom teachers and resource room teachers to communicate and share concerns about youngsters they teach.

Follow-up research is necessary to see if special education involvement of the regular classroom teacher continues to grow or if the major impetus for improvement has passed.

Perhaps research could be computer based so that curriculum, lesson plans, and homework can be programmed easily into a computer terminal, ready for instant read out when the child enters the resource room.

## Education in the Future: A Projection

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## CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY

Creating an environment where the special education student is truly integrated into the regular classroom, calls for cooperation between teachers, and a sense of collaboration on behalf of the learning disabled youngster.

The present study focused on developing modalities of communication which would prove to be effective in coordinating the efforts of both the mainstream teacher and the special education teacher. The impact of this communication system was then used to measure the teachers' attitudes and perceptions upon the special youngsters in their classrooms.

Some of the written communication forms developed by the researcher are: A weekly lesson plan sheet, a student information sheet, a teacher checklist, instructional adjustment summary sheet, and a behavioral checklist.

Flow charts were developed so that the student's I.E.P. could be read by all the mainstream classroom teachers. A faculty presentation by members of the special education department discussed the special education program and its responsibility in helping handicapped youngsters. A questionnaire was developed to measure teacher attitudes towards the mainstreaming concept.

As a result of improved communication techniques, many more regular classroom teachers gave weekly lesson plans to

the resource room teacher so that the academic lessons could be supplemented and alternate methods of learning materials could be utilized. Teachers became more sensitized to the needs of the mainstreamed special education youngster as evidenced by the increase of passing grades among resource room students.

Teacher checklists are being completed and returned to the resource room teacher, and tests are being typed rather than handwritten. New forms originating from the regular classroom teacher requesting the help of the resource room teacher are being developed. A booklet describing the functions of the resource room program is scheduled to be written in the summer of 1982.

Therefore, establishing effective communication channels, both verbally and written, will help lead to the success of a mainstreaming approach for exceptional children in the regular classroom.

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## Forms Used for Establishing Communication Between Resource Room Teacher and Regular Class Teacher

| Form Number | |
|---|---|
| 1. Weekly Lesson Plan Sheet | - Sent weekly to all regular classroom teachers working with special education students. |
| 2. Student Information Sheet | - Information sent to mainstream teacher with reading scores, math scores, strengths, deficits, learning styles, special seat placement, goals and objectives for academic achievement. |
| 3. Teacher Checklist | - A simple "Yes", "No" checklist listing attitude, homework, grades, classroom behavior, responsibility, conference request form. |
| 4. I.E.P. (Individual Educational Plan) | - A copy of complete I.E.P. is sent with a flow chart to every teacher for each individual special education student. |
| 5. Conference With Mainstream Teacher | - Form recording any plans for instruction made between the mainstream teacher and the resource room teacher. Copy given to regular teacher. |
| 6. Instructional Adjustment Summary Sheet | - After conference teacher will adjust one instructional variable, implement, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the adjustment. |

## Teacher Checklist for Student Behavior

Student's name: _____

| | All of the time | Some of the time | Usually | Seldom ever | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The student accepts authority. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 2. The student respects the property of others. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 3. The student gets along with his/her peers. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 4. The student has a satisfactory frustration tolerance. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 5. The student's self concept is satisfactory. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 6. The student's self control is satisfactory. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 7. The student completes an assigned task. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 8. The student's work is accurate. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 9. The student can work independently. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 0. The student is prepared with his/her work. | A | S | U | SE | N |
| 1. The student pays attention to class discussions. | A | S | U | SE | N |

Suggest Forms:

1. Mainstream Teacher Referral Form to Resource Room Teacher.

_____is a student in my class.

He/she is having a great deal of trouble with_____

_____.

Is it possible for you to help him/her with _____

_____.

Suggestions for textbook pages:

## STAFF AWARENESS

I. Student Profile Form
   - A. Exams - Scores
   - B. Weaknesses
   - C. Strengths
   - D. Specific areas of needed remediation

II. Learning Disabled Problem Identification
   - A. Activities of mainstream teachers
   - B. Based on your (regular class teachers) judgement and information, what do you anticipate will be the learning problems or obstacles which L.D. students will face.

III. List of Adjustments
   - A. Teachers were given a list of adjustments organized around each of the instructional variables and have them select one adjustment to alleviate one of the learning problems - time, space, material, amount, sequence, difficulty, type, grouping, mode of presentation.
   - B. Summary Sheet
     Ask teacher to keep a folder for each student to have a listing of adjustments which have worked for the individual student.

Attached are the parent-teacher conference times required by the State Department of Education to review the child's I.E.P. (Individual Educational Plan) All of these students are receiving resource room services.

Since the resource room most often reflects what the child is doing in the mainstream, we would like you to come and meet the parents.

If you have a class during the appointment time, please let us know and we can walk the parent down to your room. If you are free, please join us in the Guidance Department offices.

Thank you,

Elaine Hauptman
Ellen Black
Marsha Pacirnick

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Grades are reflective of a students' achievement? | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. Over the school year a special education student can be expected to make satisfactory progress in your classroom? | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. Although special education students have been placed in your regular classroom, the resource room teacher should assume major responsibility for learning problems that arise? | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. A special education student will likely form a positive relationship with you, the teacher. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. With special education students in your classroom there will be an increase in the number of behavior problems among the other children. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. With special education students in your classroom, an excessive amount of time for curriculum planning will be necessary | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. A special education student will develop a more positive self concept as a result of being in the regular classroom. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. A special education student in your classroom will form positive social relationships with other children in your classroom? | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. Even though the special education youngster has been placed in your classroom, special education should assume major responsibility for dealing with behavior problems that occur. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Special education students in your classroom adversely affect the other students' motivation to learn. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 11. With special education students in your classroom, there will be an increase in the number of behavior problems among the other students. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 12. There will be more problems with the parents of special education youngsters than with the parents of the other children. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 13. Teaching special education students in your classroom will increase your overall teaching competence. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 14. As a result of placement in your classroom, a special education student will develop a more positive attitude toward school. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 15. The presence of special education students in your classroom will be a cause for complaints from the parents of the other children. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 16. It is unlikely that any of the other children in your classroom will form a friendship with special education students. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 17. A special education student will not respond even to your best teaching efforts. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 18. Special education students are disruptive in your classroom. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

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| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. The other children in your classroom will tend to make a scapegoat of a special education youngster. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 20. Referrals to the school principal for disciplinary action will probably occur more frequently for special education students. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 21. There are clear guidelines for the expectations and grading of the special education student in your classroom. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 22. There are adequate materials in my department to help the special education student in my classroom. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 23. Mainstreamed special education students should be able to complete the required curriculum. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 24. Planning for special education students should be between special education teacher and regular classroom teacher. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 25. Mainstream students should be placed in your class for social purposes as that they will have a "normal" model to copy. | SA | A | U | D | SD |